

REMARKS

The Title and Specification have been amended. Claims 1 - 5 and 15 - 19 have been amended, and Claims 21 - 24 have been added. No new matter has been introduced with these amendments or added claims, all of which are supported in the application as originally filed. Claims 1 - 7, 9 - 12, 15 - 19, and 21 - 24 are now in the application.

Applicants are not conceding that the subject matter encompassed by the claims as presented prior to this Amendment is not patentable over the art cited by the Examiner, and claim amendments and cancellations in the present application are directed toward facilitating expeditious prosecution of the application and allowance of the currently-presented claims at an early date. Applicants respectfully reserve the right to pursue claims, including the subject matter encompassed by the claims as presented prior to this Amendment and additional claims, in one or more continuing applications. applications.

I. Rejection under 35 U. S. C. §103(a)

Paragraph 4 of the Office Action dated September 11, 2009 (hereinafter, “the Office Action”) states that Claims 1 - 7, 9 - 12, and 15 - 19 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as being unpatentable over U. S. Patent 7,184,940 to Matheson in view of Microsoft Project 2002, as evidenced by Pyron (hereinafter, “Pyron”) and further in view of “Motion Estimation with Quadtree Splines”, a publication of Szeliski et al. (hereinafter, “Szeliski”). This rejection is respectfully traversed with regard to the claims as currently presented.

With regard to an obviousness rejection under 35 U. S. C. §103, MPEP §2143.03 (which is titled “All Claim Limitations Must Be Considered” and which is found within Section MPEP §2143, titled “Examples of Basic Requirements of a *Prima Facie* Case of Obviousness”) quotes *In re Wilson*, 165 USPQ 494, 496 (C.C.P.A. 1970), which held that “All words in a claim must be considered in judging the patentability of that claim against the prior art.” (emphasis added)

Referring first to Applicant’s independent Claim 1, this claim as currently presented recites:

A computer-implemented method of managing a collaborative process performed in accordance with a first entity and at least a second entity, the method comprising:

a computer obtaining information associated with the collaborative process used to design and develop a given product; and

based on at least a portion of the obtained information, the computer dynamically building and maintaining an information structure as a context pyramid structure to assist at least one of the first entity and the second entity in managing at least a portion of the collaborative process;

wherein the context pyramid structure represents a status of the collaborative process using a plurality of flow lines that represent a plurality of levels of resolution of tasks in the collaborative process; and

wherein the building and maintaining comprises:

creating a lowest-level flow line to represent a lowest-level of resolution, the lowest-level flow line corresponding to a timeline for completing the collaborative process, the timeline containing a plurality of checkpoints for completing the collaborative process, each of the checkpoints represented on the lowest-level flow line by a node, the nodes comprising at least a starting node representing a starting checkpoint on the timeline and an ending node representing an ending checkpoint on the timeline; and

iteratively creating at least one next-higher level flow line to represent a next-higher level of resolution from a next-lower level flow line, for at least one pair of consecutive nodes on the flow line of the next-lower level, the next-higher level flow line corresponding to a next-higher-resolution timeline containing a plurality of higher-resolution checkpoints for completing a portion of the collaborative process that occurs between the checkpoints represented by the consecutive nodes on the lower-level flow line, each of the higher-resolution

checkpoints represented on the next-higher level flow line by a node, the nodes on the next-higher level flow line comprising at least a starting node representing a starting checkpoint on the next-higher-resolution timeline and an ending node representing an ending checkpoint on the next-higher-resolution timeline.
(emphasis added)

Applicants respectfully submit that the references fail to disclose at least the above-underlined claim recitations of Claim 1, as will now be discussed.

The “plurality of flow lines” as recited on lines 13 - 14 of Claim 1 are illustrated, for example, in Applicants’ **Figs. 9 - 11**. Building those flow lines is discussed in paras. [0067] - [0070] of Applicants’ Specification.

The Office Action cites Matheson’s **Figs. 3 - 5** as disclosing an “information structure [that] comprises a hierarchical structure”, as noted on p. 4 of the Office Action. However, Applicants respectfully submit that the asserted “hierarchical structure” from each of these figures of Matheson is simply a UML diagram showing how various parts of Matheson’s interface are related. See col. 3, lines 3 - 11, where the description of these figures is provided. These UML diagrams are clearly distinct from the context pyramid structure as currently recited on lines 10 - 31 of Claim 1. For example, Matheson’s UML diagrams fail to disclose the “plurality of flow lines that represent a plurality of levels of resolution of tasks ...” (Claim 1, lines 13 - 14). Matheson also does not teach the “building and creating ...” as recited on lines 15 - 31 of Claim 1.

The Office Action admits that neither Matheson nor Pyron “explicitly teach wherein the information structure is a *context pyramid structure*” (emphasis original). Office Action, p. 5.

Szeliski is then cited, referring to p. 10 - 11 and **Fig. 3** thereof. Applicants respectfully submit that Szeliski's **Fig. 3** does not disclose "flow lines that represent a plurality of levels of resolution of tasks ..." as recited on lines 13 - 14 of Claim 1, or "the building and creating ..." as recited on lines 15 - 31 of Claim 1. In sharp contrast, the discussion on p. 10 - 11 states, in the second paragraph of section 5, "... the number of nodes in the pyramid is equal to the original number of nodes at the finest level". This is clearly distinct from a context pyramid as recited by Applicants on lines 13 - 31 of Claim 1, when considering all the words recited therein.

Applicants also respectfully submit that Pyron does not teach the "flow lines that represent a plurality of levels of resolution of tasks ..." as recited on lines 13 - 14 of Claim 1, or "the building and creating ..." as recited on lines 15 - 31 of Claim 1. Pyron was cited in the Office Action for **Fig. 15.1** and p. 32 - 33. Office Action, p. 4. Applicants find no teaching in this discussion from Pyron of the flow lines as recited in Claim 1, when considering all the words recited therein. For example, while Pyron's **Fig. 15.1** illustrates "graphical progress lines", Applicants find no teaching that any of these lines are created "for at least one pair of consecutive nodes on the flow line of the next-lower level", as recited on lines 22 - 24 of Applicants' Claim 1.

In view of the above, Applicants respectfully submit that the references fail to disclose what Applicants have claimed in their independent Claim 1, when considering all words thereof as required by MPEP §2143.03. Without more, Claim 1 is deemed patentable according to *In re Oetiker*, 977 F.2d 1443, 24 USPQ2d 1443, 1444 (Fed. Cir. 1992), which held

If the examination at the initial stage does not produce a prima facie case of

unpatentability, then without more the applicant is entitled to grant of the patent.

Independent Claims 18 and 19 recite claim language analogous to that of Claim 1, and are rejected using the same analysis as applied to Claim 1. Office Action, para 20. Accordingly, Applicants respectfully submit that the arguments provided above with regard to Claim 1 also demonstrate the patentability of independent Claims 18 and 19. Dependent Claims 2 - 7, 9 - 12, and 15 - 17 (as well as added dependent Claims 21 - 24) are deemed patentable by virtue of at least the allowability of the independent claims from which they depend. The Examiner is therefore respectfully requested to withdraw the §103 rejection of all claims as currently presented.

II. Added Claims 21 - 24

Added dependent Claims 21 and 23 - 24 recite further detail of the building of the context pyramid structure, and added dependent Claim 22 recites further detail of the maintaining of the context pyramid structure. Applicants have demonstrated, above, that the cited references do not disclose the context pyramid structure as recited in Applicants' independent Claims 1 and 18 - 19. Accordingly, these dependent claims are patentable over the references by virtue of the patentability of the independent claims from which they depend, as well as by virtue of the further recitations which are also not disclosed by the references.

III. Conclusion

Applicants respectfully request reconsideration of the pending rejected claims, withdrawal

of all presently outstanding rejections, and allowance of all remaining claims at an early date.

Respectfully submitted,

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